

# PLANNING PRIMER

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## Overview

This document has been prepared for Ellington residents and other persons interested in the formulation of the 2006 Plan of Conservation and Development for Ellington, Connecticut. It is intended to provide general background information and an overview of:

- planning and the planning process,
- Plans of Conservation and Development, and
- planning for Ellington.

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## Introduction to Planning

### What is Planning?

Planning is a continuous process in which a community guides its growth, development, and preservation in accordance with a set of pre-established goals.

### Why Should We Plan?

Planning is something that people perform regularly in their everyday lives. People plan their: routes to work, finances, weddings, vacations and a variety of other things. In fact, people often make plans without thinking about it.

In an increasingly hectic world, planning provides the opportunity to:

- focus on the ‘bigger picture’ and identify significant goals,
- promote overall values and achieve important purposes,
- coordinate efforts and produce consistent results, and
- achieve efficiency and economy in implementation.

Since planning for communities involves decisions of permanence and substance, i.e., road networks and locating differing land uses, planning takes on a more significant role.

The bottom line is that planning helps people make good decisions and produce desired results.

*A Plan of Conservation and Development is being prepared for Ellington.*

*The Plan will identify strategies to:*

- *enhance community character, and*
- *preserve important resources,*
- *guide future development,*
- *promote quality of life for residents.*

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### On Planning

“If you don’t know where you are going, you’ll wind up somewhere else.”

**Yogi Berra,  
Baseball Legend  
Renowned Punster**

## Why Plan?

Ellington continues to be affected by events and trends in the community, the region, the country, and the world. Changes in population, housing, and the economy are influenced by transportation, utility, business and regulatory changes.

From a land use perspective, the major issue facing Ellington is how to address growth and change so that:

- the needs of the community and its residents, both present and future, are met in the most efficient and cost-effective manner;
- the character of the Town is maintained; and
- the overall quality of life is enhanced.

## On Plans and Change

“We would like to live as we once lived, but history will not permit it.”

**John F. Kennedy**

As a continuous and iterative process, planning provides the opportunity to evaluate what has happened in terms of implementation and then refine the policies or strategies to ensure that the desired results are achieved.

### GOOD PLANNING SHOULD:

- Establish a long-term vision that guides short-term decisions in a consistent way.
- Produce a vision based on open discussion and consensus.
- Establish basic parameters for future decision making.
- Provide information on the logic and parameters of a recommendation.
- Be flexible in the face of changing circumstances.
- Be a continuous, iterative process where implementation leads to new goals.

### FAILING TO PLAN MAY:

- Result in decisions that are inconsistent, inefficient, or conflict with other goals.
- Result in conflicts over the future direction of the community.
- Establish precedents that constrain future solutions.
- Complicate future decisions due to the lack of understanding of previous efforts.
- Foreclose or constrain future options.
- Result in a series of “one shot” efforts that are never implemented.

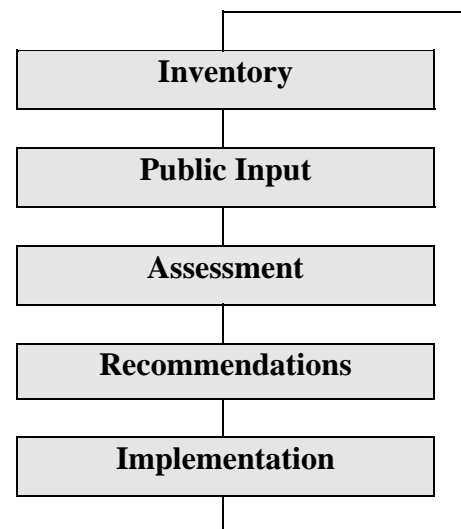
## Planning Process for Ellington

### How Will the Plan be Formulated?

The process of preparing a Plan of Conservation and Development will be overseen and coordinated by the Planning and Zoning Commission with the help of their staff and planning consultant.

Formulating the 2006 Plan of Conservation and Development will involve an intensive visionary process that emphasizes public input early in the process, through a series of public workshops, in order to formulate an overall vision for the future of Ellington.

Over the next year or so the PZC will meet regularly with the consultant, Town officials, staff, and interested citizens to review, discuss, and refine the data and recommendations that will comprise the Plan.



Emphasis will be placed on public input and involvement. Efforts will be made to encourage and consider input from Ellington residents:

- interviews will be held with different Town agencies, department heads, and individuals; and
- public workshops and meetings will be held to solicit input, generate discussion, establish visions for the future, and present recommendations.

At the completion of the public workshops, the PZC will then align the recommendations for conservation, development, and infrastructure, attempting to strike a balance between oftentimes competing goals.

Once the overall vision is established, strategies will be formulated to help achieve the overall vision, utilizing implementable policies and tasks that can be assigned to responsible agencies. Implementation is the means by which we achieve the Community's future vision.

The intended result is that the Plan will represent a consensus of Ellington residents about the future of their community. Final adoption of the Plan is the responsibility of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

### **How can the Public Participate?**

Ellington residents can participate in the planning process by providing input at a series of public workshops and meetings. There is no better way to influence the Plan than to offer good insight, constructive criticism and strategic recommendations to the Planning and Zoning Commission as the Plan is being prepared.

### **Where can Residents go to View Planning Documents?**

Persons interested in participating in the process of assembling the Plan of Conservation & Development can review the booklets on different topics that will be produced. These booklets will be placed in binders at the Town Hall and at the Ellington Public Library for review by interested persons. It is also intended to post Plan documents on the Town's official website at <http://www.ellington-ct.gov/>.

### **Community Involvement**

Planners can suggest some better ways to design and locate development; economists can tell us which patterns are most efficient from the point of view of land consumption, energy use, industrial location, etc.; and lawyers can advise on what is legal and constitutional in the way of land use regulations.

Yet it is really the community itself - whether locality, region, or state - which must try to pull all these considerations together into coherent land use planning and regulatory policies in order to preserve those things that the community values and to foster the growth and change that the community wants."

**Russell W. Peterson**  
**Former Executive Director**  
**Environmental Protection**  
**Agency**

## **Statutory Reference**

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Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that the Ellington Planning and Zoning Commission review its Plan of Conservation and Development every ten years

While statutes require that the Planning and Zoning Commission prepare a Plan, the most important reason to prepare a plan is to establish a pro-active approach to guiding Ellington's future.

A Plan of Conservation and Development is a tool for guiding the future of a community. Its purpose is to establish a common vision for the future of a community and then determine policies that will help attain that vision.

## **Ellington's Plan**

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Ellington's first Plan of Conservation and Development was adopted in 1966. It was prepared by Yardwood & Block, Inc., a planning consulting firm. The Plan was updated in 1996 through the efforts of Joe Baker, Ellington's Town Planner.

## **Use of the Plan of Conservation & Development**

A Plan of Conservation and Development becomes an official document after a public hearing and adoption by the Planning and Zoning Commission. Once adopted, the Plan is used to:

- coordinate conservation and development activities,
- guide land use decisions and regulations,
- program public projects, and
- meet identified public needs.

It is important to note that the Plan of Conservation and Development is primarily an advisory document. It is intended to guide local residents and to provide a framework for consistent decision-making with regard to conservation and development activities in Ellington over the next decade or so.

While the statutory responsibility to adopt the Plan rests with the Planning and Zoning Commission, implementation will only occur with the diligent efforts of the residents and officials of the Town of Ellington. The Plan will only be effective if it is understood and supported by the people of Ellington, and implemented by local boards and commissions.

Apart from making good sense, a Plan of Conservation and Development can have significant bearing on the Town's ability to carry out everyday planning and zoning activities, make public improvements, or secure grants.

The Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) contain several provisions pertaining to plans of conservation and development that come into play on a regular basis:

- changes to zoning regulations or districts by the Planning and Zoning Commission must be reviewed for consistency with the Plan; and
- public improvements and land transactions by the Town must also be referred to the Planning and Zoning Commission for a finding of consistency with the Plan. Disapproval by the Planning and Zoning Commission requires a two-thirds majority of the Board of Aldermen to approve a proposal.

From a funding standpoint, many grant programs, such as the Community Development Block Grant Program, require eligible projects to conform to the local Plan of Conservation and Development.

